

National Hurricane Preparedness Week, May 27th to June 2nd

National Hurricane Preparedness Week highlights the importance of planning ahead to protect our families and secure our communities and homes in advance of the upcoming hurricane season (June through November). Although the 2012 Atlantic hurricane season is projected to be less active than in recent years, the effects of these storms can be devastating and have long-lasting consequences. While seasonal forecasts are interesting situational awareness tools, it is critical to remember that weather can, and often does, act unpredictably. Therefore, we should not let our guard down as we prepare for this year's hurricane season.

Hurricanes don't need to make landfall or move directly across Virginia to cause great damage. They are powerful storms that can cause severe flooding, dangerous storm surges, high winds, and tornadoes. Last year, Hurricane Irene was a category 1 storm when its eye moved north off of the east coast of Virginia. The immediate impact of Irene on the people of Virginia included 5 deaths, power interruption for over 2.5 million people (2nd largest power outage in Virginia's history), and 80 public shelters servicing over 5000 people. Estimates for the financial impact of Irene include: \$87 million in damage to private property, \$130 million in damage to agriculture, and \$52 million cost to local governments (including public property).

Awareness of the threat is not enough -- we must translate this knowledge into action, and work together to develop prepared and resilient communities. Sound disaster management is community-oriented in that it includes all levels of government, the private sector, volunteers, community and faith-based organizations, and the public. A whole community effort is needed to effectively prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against any disaster.

During National Hurricane Preparedness Week, we emphasize the need for individuals, families, and organizations to prepare emergency plans, create emergency supply kits, and stay informed. More information on hurricane hazards and details on how to secure buildings and belongings are available at www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ and www.ready.gov/hurricanes.

Additionally, you can save money and get ready for the hurricane season during the Commonwealth's Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday from the 25th to the 30th of May. During this seven-day period, purchases of items designated by the Department of Taxation as hurricane preparedness equipment, including portable generators, will be exempt from the Virginia sales tax.

Any military organizations with questions about hurricane preparedness can contact Brendan Bowman at (804) 734-7896.